

## MMM Investigator Seed-Grants: Support for new joint research as a basis for third-party funded research proposals

The present call for **MMM Investigator Seed-Grant** applications aims to support new collaborations between MMM-members that are designed as a basis for **new joint third-party funded research proposals** (e.g., DFG) in the thematic focus of MMM. The joint work should further strengthen the ties and shared research foci between working groups of the *Minds, Media* and *Machines* High Profile Area.

MMM Investigator Seed-Grants are intended for **teams led by at least two MMM members** who will conduct a new research project in preparation of an ambitious joint line of research. Applications from MMM teams of different disciplines are especially encouraged but not a requirement. The maximum amount of MMM Seed Grant funding will be **43.000 EUR per AG per grant**. This amount has been chosen so that collaborations of two MMM members would already allow for sufficient funding of a Postdoc- or doctoral student-position for one year<sup>1</sup>. If possible, applications should already specify the names of any key personnel (Phd / Post-Doc) to be funded by the seed-grant, and their role for the planned work. If not all the key personnel are already available on site, the application should include a realistic timeline towards completion of any hiring processes.

### Grant Criteria:

The **MMM Investigator Seed-Grant** is aimed at initiatives that are designed to conduct collaborative research on Minds, Media, and Machines. The overarching goal of collaborative proposals in this funding line is to “seed” new collaborative third-party funded MMM-research in artificial intelligence, robotics, technical cognitive systems, machine learning, data science, human computer interaction, social media, and mediatisation. As per our mission statement, proposals should consider these research areas in the context of key issues related to MMM-technologies, such as the benefit and welfare of the society, taking on board aspects such as usability, privacy, security, sustainability, and lawfulness, and supporting aspects of human life ranging from the education of children to the support of the elderly.

With “seed”, we mean that the members of an MMM Seed-Grant explicitly commit to submit a **joint proposal for third-party funding** (e.g., with the DFG). The Seed-Grant application should outline how the **planned research outputs** will prepare the basis for this joint proposal submission. Seed-Grant applications should specifically describe the project’s **milestones** towards obtaining joint third party-funding. Please define your project’s **impact** and highlight how your project is going to contribute added value to MMM that would not be created otherwise. Any publications produced by the collaboration should include a funding note for the MMM Seed-Grant funding. Please indicate which funding line you are planning to submit to, which criteria you will need to meet, and how the outputs of the Seed-Grant collaboration will ensure a convincing basis for the third-party funding. Additionally, applications should outline the project’s wider contribution to the MMM ecosystem, highlighting the points that may help to distinguish it from other proposals.

The proposed project should demonstrate **scientific excellence** and describe how the current individual **expertise of the applicants** will be linked through the expected research outputs to prepare a strong proposal for third-party funding. The research plan and should describe realistic outcomes, and how they will be leveraged. The **involvement of new AGs**, who have not previously benefited from MMM Seed-Grant funding, will be positively considered. Already previously funded AGs should include a brief separate statement on their contributions and any updates to **outcomes of from previous MMM funding** that has not already been reported. Lastly, attention should be paid to the **adequacy of the requested funding**, considering the competitive nature and limited overall budget for these proposals<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See current DFG personnel rates: [https://www.dfg.de/formulare/60\\_12/v/60\\_12\\_-2024-\\_en.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/formulare/60_12/v/60_12_-2024-_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> While joint applications for larger projects (e.g., three or more members requesting the maximum amount) are allowed, final funding decisions are expected to favor a larger number of smaller competing proposals.

**Examples of possible cost positions** in this funding period include:

- Costs for temporary scientific staff, up to a 100% a PhD- or Postdoc-position<sup>3</sup>
- Funding of materials or small equipment required for the seed work and third-party funding proposal<sup>4</sup>
- Studies that aim to examine a “Living Technologies 2.0” theme with a new mix of methods. E.g., they could explore research questions at the intersection of two or more AGs, or sustainability in MMM research
- Funding for data collection / annotation student hours to pursue a new research angle within the scope of “Living Technologies 2.0”
- Conference attendance to present joint project results

Financial support for other types of costs is possible if they directly support the seed project. Collaboration with MMM-external partners is possible. However, these partners will not be eligible to received funding via the MMM Investigator Seed Grant. While we expect most projects to be conducted by two AGs in MMM, collaborations between three or more AGs are possible. Such larger collaborations will increase the overall maximum amount of funding for the entire project (e.g., a Post-Doc plus substantial additional other costs). However, the expected outcome of such collaborations should likewise be substantially higher. **We encourage potential applicants to contact us either via email at [kuester@uni-bremen.de](mailto:kuester@uni-bremen.de) or by phone (0421 218-64266) to discuss the possibilities.**

#### **Funding Conditions:**

The funding decisions for all applications will be made by the members of the MMM Executive Board. Based on the decisions, applicants will receive a decision letter addressing the above-stated grant criteria. For administrative and legal reasons, all expenses made by projects that are funded via the MMM Investigator Seed Grants will need to be executed through the MMM Office.

Funding via the MMM Investigator Seed Grants is available for **activities that can be concluded within twelve months**, including a possible temporary position for a PhD- or Postdoc-position. Projects should start, for all involved AGs, **within 6 months of the date of approval**. They should then be completed within 12 months from the start of the funding – as indicated by the first costs being booked on the project (e.g., start of the first contract). Project funding will end by **December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 (end of APF-funding)**.

MMM Seed grants are subject to the same basic rules as any other funding provided via the city state of Bremen<sup>5</sup> (“Landesmittel”). Both **PI- and Associate Investigator members of MMM are eligible** to apply for MMM Investigator Seed-Grants provided that the collaboration involves at least two AGs in MMM. Funding for a new project cannot be used to top-up a granted seed money proposal from former calls / rounds. However, AGs from the previous rounds of the MMM Seed-Grant series may apply for new projects involving new collaborations in MMM.

#### **Reporting Requirements:**

Applications are required to provide a publication plan and an outline for the targeted third-party proposal preparation and submission. A **final report** must be submitted **no later than 4 weeks after the end of the project** (ca. 3-5 pages).

Applicants further agree to support seed-grant related MMM-activities and updates. These include:

- A brief report at MMM-meetings (general assembly, retreat)
- A notice on seed-grant based manuscript submissions and grant submissions ([mmm@uni-bremen.de](mailto:mmm@uni-bremen.de))
- Manuscript submissions should include a brief **funding note** (equivalent to DFG/BMBF).

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<sup>3</sup> Current hiring- and contract extension conditions at the university should be carefully considered by the applicants prior to submitting their proposal. MMM does not (and cannot) take legal and / or administrative responsibility for such positions.

<sup>4</sup> Equipment costs should not exceed 5000€ per AG

<sup>5</sup> Grants are subject to the general rules of the University of Bremen for SAP-purchases and “Landesmittel”.

## Application Guidelines:

Applications for the MMM Investigator Seed Grant can be submitted via [E-MAIL](mailto:mmm@uni-bremen.de) to [mmm@uni-bremen.de](mailto:mmm@uni-bremen.de). Applications for this funding period will start in January 2024. **There will be a rolling deadline.** The available funding will be allocated based on the date of submission. Please use the **Application Form** below. The application should not exceed five pages, using a font size of 10 pts, plus up to 1 page for references.

|                                |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Title</b>                   | [Title]                |
| <b>List of all applicants*</b> | [name], [name], [name] |
| <b>Estimated start</b>         | [DD.MM.YYYY]           |
| <b>Estimated end</b>           | [DD.MM.YYYY]           |

### 1. Summary (max. 250 words)

[Pitch of the project idea, expected results, and how it relates to the mission of “Living Technologies 2.0”.]

### 2. Project Proposal

[Text.]

#### 2.1. Background and research questions

[This section should provide a brief statement about the background and State of Art, followed by the main research question(s) to be addressed. Relevant own previous work should be included where suitable but is not as critical as in other types of proposals due to the aim of facilitating new initiatives for collaborations in MMM.]

#### 2.2. Relevance, Objectives, and Expected Results

[This section should detail the expected outcomes of the proposed project. Explain how your work is relevant to the mission of “Living Technologies 2.0”, which MMM cross-cutting issues are addressed, and what your objectives are with respect to leveraging the project results for future work / proposals.]

#### 2.3. Methods

[Detail the methods of the proposed work, considering the methodological benefits of conducting this work collaboratively in MMM.]

#### 2.4. Workplan and Timeline

[The timeline should include target dates and suggested outlets of planned publications as well as a preliminary timeline for the planned third-party proposal preparation. Depending on the complexity of the proposed work, consider including a Gantt chart.]

#### 2.5. Resource Plan

[Brief summary of the individual items.]

| Nr.                 | Requested item | Cost [EUR] |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1                   |                |            |
| 2                   |                |            |
| <b>Total amount</b> |                |            |

\* if a currency conversion is required, please use <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/> and indicate the date of the conversion.

## References

[References should adhere to the APA reference style (7<sup>th</sup> Edition).]

### 3. Statement [may use digital signatures]

The applicant(s) has (have) no other financial resources available or requested for the activity.

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Date, Signature

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Date, Signature

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Date, Signature